

CHINA'S ROMANCE WITH AFRICA: A FOREIGN POLICY CLASH BETWEEN EURO-AMERICAN AND CHINESE STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN AFRICA?

By

Michael Kebofilwe Moleleke

THESIS

Submitted to

KDI School of Public Policy and Management

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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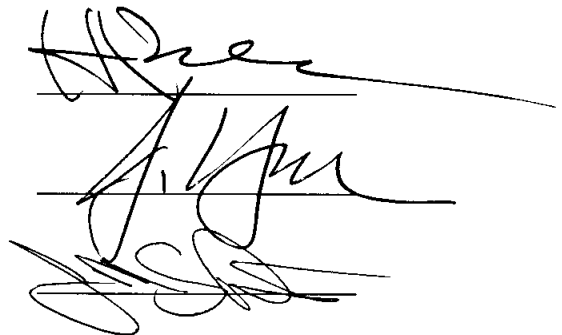
MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY

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ABSTRACT

It seems like Africa is increasingly becoming a new battlefield for hegemonic power play between China and Western countries especially the United States. As a globally rising China continues to pick up the pace in her engagement with the continent, encroaching in the traditional Western sphere of influence, the key question is whether the clash is going to be peaceful or confrontational and whether it would serve Africa and the rest of the world any good. This paper argues that the increasing and simultaneous Chinese and Western engagement in the continent is a positive development because while they are able to have more access to the resources they need, they are also helping Africa to rebuild her economies and other political and administrative institutions. While China is noticeably rising as a power, she does not pose any immediate threat to challenge the superiority of the US. Whether it is a deliberate tactic by Beijing to remain benign, and play a waiting game for the right moment for 'Chinese day in the sun' remains a debate for another day. China and the US stand a better chance to use the Africa platform as to create an avenue through which they could work together to help solve some of the problems which the continent has battled with in long time. As more and more young and educated leaders emerge in the continent, the prospects are such that they bring fresh and new ideas which can put Africa in a good stead to handle the new attention. Thus it puts the imperative on the African leadership to play their active part fully. At the end, a combined, well-coordinated Chinese and Western cooperation in Africa stand to serve well global peace, security and economic prosperity.

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DEDICATION

To my Dear Wife, the love of my life, Nozizwe, and our two boys, Zethu and Futhi. No one made a better sacrifice to let me leave Gaborone to Seoul at such a time when you really needed me the most. Much love for such an inspiration. I will always put you first.

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MOKGALO.

ABBREVIATIONS

AFRICOM–United States Africa Command

AGOA – Africa Growth and Opportunity Act

AU – African Union

DRC- The Democratic Republic of Congo

DTC – Diamond Trading Centre

EU – European Union

FDI – Foreign Direct Investment

FTA – Free Trade Agreements

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

ICT- Information, Communication Technology

IMF – International Monetary Fund

IPA – Investment Promotion Agency

KDI – Korea Institute of Development School of Public Policy and Management

MCA – Millennium Challenge Account

MFA – Multi Fiber Agreement

OECD–Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development

REC – Regional Economic Communities

SSA – Sub –Saharan Africa

UN – United Nations

US – the United States

USSR – Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics

WTO – World Trade Organization.

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1. Introduction.

As the world seemingly trends toward multi-polarity, Africa is increasingly becoming the new battlefield for hegemonic power play between China and the United States. From politics to trade, investment to foreign aid, from military to security, culture to resources diplomacy, and political to economic engagement, the increasing public contact between Africa and these two de facto powerhouses has heightened global interest in the region. Tension between the two countries has been rising concerning many issues including currency manipulations, China's human rights record, and America's military presence in East Asia, to mention but some. Moreover, there are fears that Africa is increasingly becoming one part of the problem. The compelling nature of this observation has led to Gill, Morrison and Huang to highlight that "China's emergence as a rising global power is directing increasing attention to the activities and intentions of its expansive foreign policy worldwide. While much of this attention focuses on China's clout in Asia, China's increasing economic, political, and diplomatic activities in Africa and other parts of the world are also coming under greater scrutiny".¹ While the debate continues, perhaps it is important to ponder if the world should brace itself for a confrontational contact between these powers in the continent and, even beyond, spilling over into other regions of the world. It is worthy to recall Vogel's weighty questions when he wondered:

can the United States, as the world's dominant power, adjust to the rise of a major new power as England did when the United States spurted ahead at the end of the nineteenth century? Or will it, like Western powers dealing with Japan and Germany during the first half of this century, mishandle a rising power, alienating but not deterring China and contributing to a cataclysmic result?²

¹ Gill, Bates, Morrison, Stephen. J and Huang, Chin-Hao, China-Africa Relations: An Early, Uncertain Debate in the United States, 169.

² Vogel, Ezra. How Can the United States and China Pursue Common Interests and Manage

Arguably, China's encroachment into Africa is causing serious disquiet in the US as they probably feel the presence of this East Asian power in a territory which they have traditionally dominated in a long time. Ampiah and Naidu argue that "the geopolitical implications of these developments are profound, if only because China is seemingly challenging the hegemonic positions long monopolized by the United States (US), Britain and France in Africa. There are anxieties in certain quarters about the spreading shadow of a non-traditional foreign power in the region, and questions about China's intentions with respect to Africa".³ The West has never known any challenger to their presence and influence in Africa in a long time until the recent visible rise of China. How the US adjusts to the reality that China has emerged as a major force in a manner that threatens her superiority is obviously becoming a strong topic for discussion. Possibilities of miscalculation remain alive and the best methods in which this could be contained requires intense analysis to ensure geopolitical stability in the region and beyond. For Africa, the situation will need to be better managed because the continent has experienced so much turmoil, a fact underscoring the need for African governments to seriously consider how they should become part of a winning solution in the US-China tangle. As such, the continent has the full capability to influence the manner of engagement between the three parties.

Confirmed to be host to multiples of natural resources, Africa has always been a global source of raw materials demanded in the most industrialized Western countries. As observers generally believe, the centre of global power has shifted from the global north to China and East Asia. Now questions are emerging as to whether the development is breeding

Differences, 20.

³Ampiah, Kweku and Naidu, Sanusha, Africa and China in Post-Cold War Era, 3.

a condition either for cooperation or conflict in the international sphere as a justification for power and global influence intensifies. Ikenberry offers a warning when he writes that:

if the U.S. – China relations become beset with geopolitical conflict, arms competition, and zero-sum rivalry, the peace and stability of the wider global system will be at risk. But if the United States and China succeed in finding ways to manage their differences and to develop an expansive agenda of economic and political, and security cooperation, the prospects for peace and stability within Asia and across the globe will be strengthened as well.⁴

What is clear and now well-known is that China has developed into a leading global economic powerhouse, which has given her the impetus to want to lead the world in dictating the pace of global trade and investments and political influence worldwide. It is also true that the rise of China has set in motion a reorientation of the US and Europe towards Africa. As the traditional powers adjust to these new realities, it is a matter of debate whether it will benefit international peace and security and the global political economy in the process. If the interaction of the West and China in Africa is let to follow selfish and self-seeking objectives, the world should brace for an unhealthy competition that would ultimately lead to compromised efforts towards the attainment of the global good.

According to Alden, “nowhere in the world is China’s rapid rise to power more evident than in Africa. From multi-billion dollar investments in oil and mineral development to the influx of Chinese consumer goods, China’s economic influence is redefining Africa’s traditional ties with the international community”.⁵ This new phenomenon leads to suggestions that China’s influence and power in the world has reached a point where they believe that they need to be more assertive and be counted as a superpower. They bring a

⁴Ikenberry, John. G, *The Rise of China, The United States, and the Future of the Liberal International Order*, 53.

⁵Alden, Chris, *China’s New Engagement with Africa*, 213.

fresh appeal to Africa in the sense that they emphasize equal sovereignty and political non-interference. In a way, this approach endears Beijing to many African capitals more than Washington DC, a situation that could lead to a critical clash of strategic interests between the US and China. If made to believe that African leadership is poised to replace them with China, the West may be tempted to create a difficult working environment that would hurt both Beijing and Africa's development objectives in the long run. They may do so by ensuring that they withdraw from some of the critical agendas of engagement which they have traditionally supported especially in health, education and security sectors. In the end, because China may not be able to shoulder the responsibility alone, a further erosion of the continent's ability address domestic challenges better than she could do at the moment.

There is no doubt that China has had an impressive economic growth record while at the same time the US has been experiencing some domestic economic troubles. Yew highlights that “during the 1978 -2011 period China's high average growth – about 10% annually – was the result of Deng Xiaoping's 1978 trip to Singapore and his subsequent decision to implement economic reforms and open the economy to international investment. During that same period the U.S economy's annual growth rate was 2% to 3%”.⁶ Although still considered the most powerful and best sophisticated military power in the world, the US has also experienced some overstretch in their global military outreach strategy while China has steadily increased her defense budget expenditure and military modernization. Also, China has been calculative in her involvement and participation in armed conflict resolutions beyond her borders, sparing enough room for developing the capacity of a powerful and sophisticated military in the long run. Tellis expresses some concerns about the possibility of

⁶ Yew, Lee Kuan, Once China Catches Up – What Then? www.forbes.com/sites/.../once-china-catches-up-what-then/ Accessed on 25/02/2014.

an armed conflict between China and the US and argues that “although the presence of nuclear weapons on both sides will likely prevent any conflict – if it one were to occur – from generating into unlimited war, any realist would predict that the broad bilateral relationship is nonetheless likely to remain anything but harmonious”.⁷ Conventional wisdom dictates that the most powerful economies have a tendency to build military strength as a strategy to attain hegemonic status in the world. Is this historical fact making the US to look at China as a potential rival or a partner? And as such, is the increasing activity of these countries in Africa a side issue that only works to conceal a broader picture power play in the offing? Rather than preoccupying themselves with too much superiority over each other, especially from a militarized perspective, there could be better ways through which these two countries could work together towards a safer world, which brings rewards to all. This paper strongly believes, as it suggests, that not only Africa stands to benefit from an increased cooperation and joint efforts by the US and China to solve the many problems which have besieged the continent for so long, and that it would also work towards a peaceful international community and create more opportunities for global development.

It is also very critical that Africa is not forced into a situation where she will be misled into pitting China and the US against each other in a confrontational manner, but rather in a mutually beneficial and collaborative way. Obviously when it comes to resource acquisition, traditional economics would inform that competition for natural resources in Africa would help derive better deals for the continent from both China and the US. However, the continent finds itself in a peculiar position where bargaining tactics would do more harm than yield any handsome economic results because of the different packages on offer from

⁷Tellis, Ashley. J, U.S – China Relations in a Realist World, 93.

either side, and their primary interests. As a result, utmost caution would have to be exercised to circumvent any undesirable outcomes.

Placing the China –Africa – US relationship in an analogical context, perhaps it would be best to explore a working mechanism similar to what Nielsen referred to as a tripartite alliance that could result in greater rewards to all parties. Writing about a scenario where elephants and ants simultaneously found themselves interested in a particular tree in Kenya, he offers a compelling case where the safety of the tree relies heavily on the nature of interactions between elephants and ants. A delicacy to the elephants, yet a dilemma to face extinction given the animals' humongous appetite, the tree is forced to find a defence mechanism to protect itself. As a result, it offers an invitation to a swarm of ants, the latter also having special interest in a tasty sap secreted by the former, in return for protection from being eaten to death by the elephants. As the battle ensues between the elephants and the ants over this particular tree, Nielson argues that “a peace accord between the warring species would be one of the worst ways this war could end”.⁸ Once under attack, the ants would make their presence known to the tree that it is under siege and the tree would automatically respond by secreting the sap to attract more ants and the elephant would stand no chance and they could only eat so much of the tree. To end the tussle between China and US, if at all proven, one wonders if this would be a chosen way of doing it. If not, then in this triangle of co-existence, China (elephants) –Africa (the tree) – the US (ants) would need to find a peaceful way of living with each other because without each other life would prove difficult. This point emphasizes the fact that countries need each other in order to survive despite the

⁸Nielsen, Alden, In Battle of Elephants and Ants, Trees Win Big, 2008. :National Public Radio (NPR), 2008. Accessed on 26/7/2013. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story.php?storyId=17992062>

fact that their interests could be different. As it stands, the United States and China seem to want to portray themselves to Africa in exclusive terms, much that the continent is motivated to look at either of them according to what the other think of another. It is very rare, if any at all, to find any form of assistance, whether development aid or any form of financing offered by these two powers supporting a common initiative in the continent. Therefore, Africa is well placed to dictate how much penetration into the region could the US and China manage at any given time by balancing their competing interests with the needs of the continent. The three need each other and the imperatives shall be such that all of them recognize the importance of each to all and to also realize that working in isolation can never be the best alternative to unleash the full potential of their engagement.

2. Literature Review

According to Ampiah and Naidu:

the evolving relationship between China and Africa could be one of the most important developments in the international relations of the post-Cold war era. In the last two decades, there have been profound changes in Africa's relationship with China, not least in the phenomenal growth in trade and investment between Beijing and several African countries. This transformation of relationship between China and Africa has undoubtedly placed this engagement at the centre of the debate about Africa and its future prospects, thereby conforming Beijing as an important actor in the continent's development objectives".⁹

The increasing demand for natural resources in China as a result of a burgeoning consumer middle class has meant that she embarks on a global search for them and Africa has provided a natural choice as a major source. As a result, there have been dramatic increases in China's investments in Africa, which some have suggested it is mostly tied to the need to secure access to natural resources to satisfy her demand and the process of emboldening her

⁹Ampiah and Naidu, Africa and China in the post-Cold War Era, 3.

status as a new global power. Time really flies fast. As recent as 1997, Vogel boldly stated;

China is not yet a superpower. Even measured by purchasing power parity, the Chinese economy lags far behind the U.S. economy. Measured by current exchange rates, China is decades behind Japan, to say nothing of the United States. Its foreign investment and international trade lag behind those of major European countries. Its per capita is below \$1000 per year, and inner China is likely to remain poor well into the next century. China's infrastructure, including roads, railways, ports, telecommunications, and electric power facilities, is at best several decades behind that of modern countries.¹⁰

Just a little over a decade, another commentator, Yew posits that “despite the financial debt crisis in Europe and the turmoil in U.S. markets over the past few years, China's economy has continued to register strong growth. According to the World Bank, China's \$8.22 trillion economy is now the second largest in the world, compared with the \$15.68 trillion U.S. economy. China is the world's largest exporter and its second –largest importer”. This tremendous, and rather dramatic increase in industrial growth and activity over the past few years, has propelled China to yield an economic output and a healthy GDP growth at the rates only associated with a few economies around the world. Current projections indicate that the trend will likely continue positively for some time thus strengthening the country's current advantage of trade imbalance with her major trading partners including the US and Europe. Maybe as a quest to stymie China's advances, the West seem to have chosen to reenter and make new efforts to increase their visibility in Africa and commentary has been increasing that the second advent of the ‘scramble of Africa’, and if not in action yet, it is very imminent. Alden, saying of Africa's importance to China:

as African resources become increasingly important to the health of the Chinese economy, the continent also occupies an important place in China's global ambitions. China's emergence as a key player in Africa, the impact of its presence, and its challenge to traditional Western preeminence in African economies are critical components of its dynamic new relationship.¹¹

¹⁰Vogel, How Can the United States and China Pursue Common Interests and Manage Differences?, 18.

¹¹Alden, China's New Engagement with Africa, 213.

As China becomes more and more integrated with African economies, the Western countries are finding a new Africa that does not simply take development prescriptions as normal and this is by no means difficult to attribute it to the new alternatives provided by Beijing, in financing, technical assistance and development aid. Idun-Arkhurst and Laing have observed that:

Chinese development aid helps to finance infrastructure projects, including road and railway rehabilitation, hydropower stations, stadia, hospitals, schools. By 2005, Chinese companies had been contracted to 722 turn-key projects across Africa. By mid-2006, total China Eximbank concessional and non-concessional loans for infrastructural development in Africa in Africa, excluding projects in the petroleum and mining sectors were US\$12.5bn.¹²

As opposed to the conditionalities that often came with Western assistance to Africa, China assumes a conditions-free approach or relaxed concessional conditions in her relationship with the continent. In the process it makes it easy for China to be viewed more openly and warmly by African governments in terms of trade-related arrangements. As the situation unfolds, Gaye posits that “various reactions are generated by the Chinese presence in Africa. The more optimistic are glad that they have come at and perceive them first and foremost as potential investors in a continent starved of capital and which can only benefit from the technology and expertise they bring along”.¹³ The continent has received heaps of aid from the West over the years but the intended results have never been realized and with the new Chinese entry and approach, there is growing optimism that the fortunes will soon change for the better.

Beyond the economic ambitions to garner natural resources to feed her industrial demand, China is also being seen by other observers as yearning for global recognition as the

¹²Idun-Arkhurst, Isaac and Laing, David, *The Impact of Chinese Presence in Africa*, 12.

¹³ Gaye, Adama, *China in Africa: After the Gun and the Bible...A West African Perspective*, 132-33.

new world power. Some commentary has it that she is deliberately encroaching into Africa and other regions of the developing world to check the reaction of the traditional powers from the global north. This point is further consolidated by Le Pere by suggesting that

China's attempt to develop a strategic partnership is consistent with Beijing's global foreign policy strategy and thrust and its vision for a different kind of global order. As such, China's core national interests and its own imperatives for growth and development will increasingly bind it to Africa: it needs resources for its growth and modernization, its markets to sustain its growing economy and it requires political alliances to support its global ambitions".¹⁴

The question is whether the so-called 'China's day in the sun' has finally arrived and whether it is about time others made way for China to take its rightful place in the committee of global powers, perhaps as the ultimate voice. These are serious questions which demand answers and they need to be addressed as soon as possible for history teaches that the exchange of the baton of hegemony is not always an easy vocation. If one was to go with the words of Hirst, citing the end of the Cold War as a turning point, she observes that "China emerged on the international arena as a defender of a multipolar world order and as a key vis-à-vis the developing world".¹⁵ Beijing's close relationship with Africa and given the influence she now commands in many African capitals is telling. This will certainly be a major talking point because strategically it carries the implications of a challenge to US supremacy in the continent. Such is the concern which some observers predict that it could lead to intense and negative competition between Washington DC and Beijing. Gill, Morrison and Huang warn that "the situation will impede the near-term formulation of an integrated, coherent US strategy that might leverage areas of common interest while mitigating those areas where US national interests and values are in conflict with Chinese approaches".¹⁶ The

¹⁴ Le Pere, Garth, *The Geo-Strategic Dimensions of the Sino-African Relationship*, 32.

¹⁵Hirst, Monica, *A South-South Perspective*, 90.

¹⁶ Gill, Morrison and Huang, *China – Africa Relations: AN Early, Uncertain Debate in the United*

absence of such coherence and the disregard of the greater benefit of cooperation in favor of selfish interests between the West and China can only spell doom for Africa's future prospects. The fact of the matter is that the Chinese increasing expansion into Africa does not show any sign of abating any time soon which implies that other stakeholders would have to find the means of accommodating the development.

To mark her intent with action, China convened the first ever China – Africa Summit in 2006 and the event has sort of set the cardinal for re-looking at how the rest of the world should now look at Africa because the China – Africa relationship comes at a critical time when the continent is faced with a choice of following the normal as usual or bucking the trend and creating an all new dimension of how she engages with the rest of the world. This development led to Brautigam to express that:

the Beijing Summit focused attention on development in a part of the world that has seen far more than its share of dispiriting headlines. It forced the West to focus on something new: Chinese aid and forms of economic engagement were sharply in the rise in Africa. China was on track to become the African continent's largest trading partner, outpacing Britain and the United States.¹⁷

Soon after the 2006 Summit, China's engagement with Africa rose in leaps and bounds to a point where now Beijing is the continent's largest trading partner at the moment. From loans to infrastructure projects, Chinese companies are beating the West to snatch lucrative deals in Africa. Of course there have been lots of talk, especially from the West that China is only interested in securing access to African resources under the pretext of 'soft loans' and claims of 'equal sovereignty'. However, putting the blame on China through such pronouncements matter very little because Africa has chosen to work with China in a way

States, 169.

¹⁷Brautigam, Deborah, *The Dragon's Gift*, 2.

that provides more convenience in comparison to what the West has always done in the continent.

From a set of two eyes, the big question is whether it is a matter of making room for another superpower or simply a matter of making way for a new superpower? The US' "pivot to Asia policy" is not a secret and it forms part of the country's grand strategy of perpetuating its hegemony, in a way that it weakens the power and influence of China in East Asia and Africa. As a matter of fact, China is not expected to stand by, fold her arms and watch the US tighten her grip of influence in Asia. China has started to show signs of rejecting 'the pivot' initiative because she finds it to be provocative because they believe the time has come for the US to accept that the time has come for them to vacate Asia. In numerous ways, Beijing has signaled to Washington DC that the obtaining order will have to change in order for peaceful co-existence to blossom. While Chinese influence in Asia is visibly increasing, expert opinion is suggesting that the pattern might as well be expanding even further into other regions further ashore. Africa has proven to be the easiest target for Chinese global expansion, where the West's influence has been gradually dwindling over the past few years. The US may get to find that the 'pivot' is becoming increasingly costly because part of the strategy would be for them to follow the Chinese wherever they go so that they could easily keep them on check. The increasing calls in the West, especially in the US, for the containment of China bear testimony to the fact that Washington DC does not seem to be ready to accommodate an equally powerful player. As such, the tendency would be for the US to deploy every tactic to ensure that the challenge of a new superpower is thwarted at all costs. At the same time, the revisionist power, that which is China now, the status quo should change to accommodate a new world order where a multiple of players are able to share a common table. As the old refuses to die and the new struggles for its birth, often a time a

confrontation would ensue. As a cause for alarm, Friedberg paints a picture that makes for concern:

Throughout history, relations between dominant states and rising ones have been uneasy and often violent. Established powers tend to regard themselves as the defenders of an international order that they helped create and from which they continue to benefit; rising powers feel constrained, even cheated, by the status quo and struggle against it to take what they think is rightfully theirs.¹⁸

Murmurings are increasing that the US and the West's recent military activities in the continent are well pivoted at containing China's rise and influence in the Africa. Unless the US can address these speculations, the debate will wander into an area of uncertainty and mistrust, which only works to create hard feelings between the two countries. Especially coming from Western commentators, there is a tendency to paint China in bad light in order to make a case for their interests to be favoured in the continent at the expense of Beijing, most of which is not always truthful. This argument is captured by Gill, Morrison and Huang when they add that:

in the absence of a better-formed and better-informed American official response to China generally, and to China-Africa relations in particular, more provocative voices fill the void in a negative and zero-sum way. Some American voices argue that the Chinese engagement in Africa is predominantly of a form of crude mercantilism and political interventionism that directly threatens US interests and hence call for confrontation, condemnation and containment".¹⁹

To further excite this debate, with reference to the 2012 military intervention in Mali by France, which was later supported materially by most of the West, Schreiner argues that:

all the attention on combating al-Qaeda in northern Mali has provided the perfect power for the US and its junior Western partners to pursue a grand strategy of containment against China. And with China increasingly out competing Western interests throughout Africa, one

¹⁸Friedberg, Aaron. L, A Contest for Supremacy – China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia, 1.

¹⁹ Gill, Morrison and Huang, China-Africa Relations: An Early, Uncertain Debate in the United States, 175.

understands the sudden neo-colonial urge in the West.²⁰

The fact that most, if not all, of the countries which have been struck by a spate of uprisings and unrest are seen to be more loyal to China than the West, fuels the speculation even further. Beyond economics, China's political influence in Africa has also come under critical examination and many in the West perceive it to be detrimental to their interests and continuing dominance.

It is unfathomable in the immediate future but perceptions sometimes precede reality and such comments about the US working to contain China by clandestine strategies, may lead to miscalculations thus potentially fuelling a new escalation in to conflict. As the confrontation gains momentum it would manifest itself in proxy conflicts fought in peripheral alliances to disguise a direct show of antagonism in order to protect their moral imperatives. However, Shambaugh argues that "militarily, China is not able to project power outside of its Asian neighborhood (other than ballistic missiles, space program, and cyber warfare capacities, and even in Asia its military power projection capacities remain limited (although growing)".²¹ It may not be as conclusive to suggest that China is so simply incapable of projecting her power to the level which is commensurate with her increasing global stature because of capacity and quality limitations on the basis that Beijing seems benign in behavior or showing no practical interest in making military interventions in Africa or any part of the world besieged by conflict. China's strategy seems more to be pivoted on a

²⁰ Schreiner, Ben, Hidden Agenda Behind America's War on Africa: Containing China by 'Fighting Al-Qaeda': Global Research on Globalisation (January 29, 2013).
<http://www.globalresearch.ca/hidden-agenda-behind-americas-war-on-africa-containing-china-by-fighting-al-qaeda/5320939>. Accessed on 28/7/2013.

²¹Shambaugh, China Goes Global: The Partial Power, 9.

Careful plan to grow her power and influence in a manner that does not immediately thumb on the buttons that could trigger conflict with may need to be met with force. The plan is more like waiting on your prey so that you could pounce at the right moment. Projections have indicated that if China could maintain her current GDP growth over the next decade, it would not be too far to predict that they will be able to surpass the US as the world largest economy in the next ten or so years. As such, Beijing's economic rise will certainly advance her stature military wise, giving her more impetus to exert more and more pressure to make her influence count even more. In this world of anarchy, sometimes it happens that 'big and small' matter less when it comes to conflict, especially when the so-called smaller power feels threatened. There is also a tendency for the antagonists to engage in mind games, bringing other players into the stage as the battlefield expands. The Cold War is a perfect example of a major global encounter of hegemonic supremacy which brought the US head on with the former Soviet Union, where instead of directly sparing with each, they fueled a lot of conflicts between other countries along ideological divisions. A n arms race broke out in faraway places like Africa, Latin America and Asia, leaving a trail of destruction and untold loss of life.

In some quarters, hope still remains that the US and China have no immediate incentive to take to arms in order for them to prove who is the boss. The former Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, in a conversation with Allison and Blackwill, however, plays down the possibility of a scenario similar to U.S – USSR rivalry by saying that “unlike U.S –Soviet relation during the Cold War, there is no irreconcilable ideological conflict between the US and a China that has enthusiastically embraced the market...Sino-US relations are both cooperative and competitive. Competition between them is inevitable, but

conflict is not”.²² If this assertion holds true, then there is little to worry about the politics of containment, which may eventually turn into a military display of ferocious force to repel each other’s influence wherever possible. Nonetheless, there are still fears that the elbowing which is seemingly taking place in Africa between China and the West provides for risks which may not do Africa’s development any positive favours let alone the peace and economic prosperity of the world.

It would also appear that some commentary thinks that Washington’s global power is waning even though others still believe that it is premature to suggest that as a fact. For those whom do not think that the US is losing its standing in world politics, the fact could only be that other powers are emerging and the fact that they are becoming more assertive does not mean that the take-over is on the horizon. None other than Lee Kuan Yew remains forthright in disputing the claims that American power is declining and argues that of course “the U.S is going through a bumpy patch with its debt and deficits, but I have no doubt that America will not be reduced to second-rate status. Historically, the U.S has demonstrated a great capacity for renewal and revival”, (Allison and Blackwill).²³ However, borrowing from history once more, economic power always precedes increased military power which catapults a country into the summit of global power and dominance as the US has proven in recent history and other European powers in the past. On the basis of this analogy some observers believe that China has made significant leaps into their realm. On the other hand, it is generally observed that US military power cannot be matched by any ‘power claimants’ of today, not China, and not even Russia. However, nothing needs to be taken for granted and as Wortzel clearly

²²Allison and Blackwell, Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Masters Insights on China, the United States, and the World, 38.

²³Ibid, 20.

points out, “China’s military forces are developing dangerous capabilities – certainly more dangerous than they were a decade ago”.²⁴ As much as it makes for a difficult path towards concrete conclusions, China is obviously marching ahead economically and the fact she has been systematically increasing her defence budget expenditure over the past few decades makes people to believe that they want to catch up as fast as they can. It might be too early to identify any meaningful advances made by China in Africa with respect to the expression of military strength. However, it is worth noticing that China has steadily increased her visibility in Asia and voicing some discomfort at the continued military presence of the US in the region. If the pattern could continue, it might prove to be a serious point of contention between Beijing and Washington DC, which carries the potential of upsetting the global order as we know it today. As the US becomes more and more overstretched in their global military interests, the easier for other rising powers like China to step up and claim some stake at filling the void where Washington is unable to effectively execute their foreign policy in order to protect their hegemonic ambitions.

Power politics is a cost in itself and once a country deliberately embarks on heavily militarizing its politics, the recipe for confrontation becomes a living possibility at all times. It does not take a genius to read that the United States has been economically spent and militarily over-stretched because of the latest external wars in which they are heavily involved. If the trend continues, it may prove so difficult to match Chinese military expenditure toe-to-toe on current accounts, which may shorten the catch-up time. Some observers though also see China as a reluctant superpower which believes her seemingly urgency to build up military strength even though it is also noticeable that her military assistance to Africa has been on the increase for some time now. There has been increasing

²⁴Wortzel, Larry. M, The Dragon Extends its Reach, 44.

call upon China to step up into the international sphere to assume her responsibilities, especially the provision of global public goods like security because she is now regarded as one of the leading power in the contemporary geopolitical system. While the apparent increase in military expenditure, expansion and modernization in Beijing has been viewed as an indication of a show of intent to rival the United States, perhaps it is also important to consider the possibility that China is preparing herself to fulfill the expectations placed upon her shoulders by the international community to help create a more secure world. In Africa, for example, Shinn, commenting on the activities of China following the unrest in Mali in 2012 in the wake of religious extremists toppling the government, and said:

China has traditionally been relatively passive when it comes to dealing with extremism and terrorism in Africa. China's response this year in Mali to earlier Islamist success which have been temporarily halted by French and African military intervention, suggest that Beijing may in the future pursue a more activist counter-terrorism policy.²⁵

Commendable as it may, this is one of the many windows of opportunity where China and the United States can work in concert with African governments to establish strong alliances to combat common global challenges including terrorism.

Another interesting point of discussion in relation with China- Africa engagement involves the role of the European Union, a huge US ally, in the continent. For the most part, following the end of the Second World War, Western Europe has always acted in tandem with the US, with much of their shared policy directions and interests dictated from Washington DC. After their conquest and subsequent arbitrary division and sharing of Africa in the infamous Berlin Conference, Western Europe experienced a boom economically and their

²⁵Shinn, David, China's Response to the Islamist Threat in Mali: China –US Focus: 21 June 2013.

[Http://www.chinausfocus.com/peace-security/chinas-response-to-the-islamist-threat-in-mali/](http://www.chinausfocus.com/peace-security/chinas-response-to-the-islamist-threat-in-mali/).

Accessed on 26/11/2013.

political might spread across the world. However, following the end of colonialism and two World Wars which caused a lot of destruction to their economic infrastructures, the path to rebooting their economic growth has proven to be a serious challenge, especially in recent years.

It looks increasingly likely that it would also prove to be such a massive challenge to Europe to continue with their economic and political stranglehold in Africa. Berger spots the problem for Europe as coming from the Chinese penetration and he presents that in Africa, “China has engaged in bureaucratic cooperation: enhancing infrastructure, offering cheaper goods than Europe, inexpensive loans and a zero-tariffs policy. The EU has had difficulty matching these points”.²⁶ The end of colonialism has decimated Europe’s influence and access to cheap raw materials in Africa, a development which has affected their ability to reach new heights of growth economically. There is no doubt that now they see Chinese activity increasing in the continent as a serious threat to their future survival and revival. Tull also makes an interesting observation about the EU:

As elsewhere, China’s rapidly increasing involvement in Africa over the last few years has drawn significant attention in Europe. The reasons for this are not hard to identify. Firstly, European countries, along with the US and Japan as well as international financial organizations in which they have large stakes, considered themselves to be the main layers in Africa’s external relations. Secondly, there was a widespread sense of incredulity that a rising superpower should show keen interest in a continent that large parts of the European public regard as hopeless on account of its widespread poverty and wars.²⁷

Africa now has alternative markets for their resources and it complicates the equation even further for the former colonial masters which has led to suggestions that there could be a political power showdown on the cards in the continent. China has come to do what they

²⁶Berger, Bernt, China Outwits the EU in Africa. The Asia Times Online Ltd., online.2007. Accessed on 30/07/2013 <http://atimes.com/atimes/China/IL13Ad01.html>.

²⁷Tull, Denis, China in Africa: European Perceptions and Responses to the Chinese Challenge, 2.

could not while they had an unrivaled opportunity and given their current economic situations, they obviously feel that Beijing has effectively taken their place and is slowly crowding them out.

It is also worth noting though that Chinese encroachment into Africa has also been met with complaints that it is contributing towards the deterioration of governance issues in Africa because of the ‘non-interference’ doctrine. While it is agreed that China has provided Africa with an alternative market and source of development financing, there are worries that it is also providing a life line to regimes which have been condemned for abuses of political power and economic mismanagement of national resources. As Zafar captures it “China’s lack of attention to governance, and human rights issues in Africa, as testified by its support of pariah regimes in Sudan and Zimbabwe and its thinking of aid from political reform, has raised concerns that the flow of Chinese aid may cause African governments to delay reforms that promote openness and accountability.”²⁸ This is one critical area where China also need to acknowledge that it is also important that they engage responsibly with the continent so that they could help Africa achieve different and better results from what they got at the height of their engagement with the West. The point is not for China to prove that her more generous acceptance in Africa but any means that imply that the continent is rejecting the West.

A further problem which is observed with respect to China – Africa trade relationship is that it is not significantly different from what the Europeans did during the days of colonialism. Putting aside the commendable fact that China has come to help Africa refurbish

²⁸Zafar, Ali, *The Growing Relationship Between China and Sub-Saharan Africa: Macroeconomic, Trade, Investment, and Aid Links*, 106.

and build new development-standard infrastructure, the content of trade does not depict a picture of equal traders. Using South Africa as a case analysis, Schoeman reveals that there have been some concerns about the structure of trade between Beijing and Pretoria. He writes that “China recently surpassed Germany as South Africa’s largest import market, and South Africa accounts for about 25% of China’s African trade, with South Africa exporting goods to China to the value of US\$2.2b and importing goods to the value of US\$7b. Apart from the trade balance in favor of China, there is an apprehension about the nature of products traded”.²⁹ As a matter of fact, the scenario is not only limited to South Africa but widespread across the continent. There also has been an outcry in Africa that the bulk of imports from China are cheap and of low quality and that they also out-compete local identical suppliers of certain goods, thus killing the local production capacity to the point where they shut down and countless numbers of people lose their jobs.

Now the question is whether Africa is prepared to handle these clashes and further whether the continent is well-equipped to maximize on the opportunity that is presented by these economic engagements. It is also important to figure out how the US and China as well as the EU could be pragmatically dissuaded from turning Africa into a battleground, especially if the matter on the table is a disguise to extend their hostility towards each other. The call is upon African leadership to dictate the tone of the engagement in line with the needs and development plans of the continent. Poignantly supporting this call are Gill, Morrison and Huang when they posit that “the United States and other Western powers are neither gatekeepers nor chaperones. They are merely important players on a broadening, and more intensely competitive, playing field. How China does in Africa, for better or worse, will

²⁹Schoeman, Maxi, China and Africa: whose challenge and whose opportunity?, 406.

ultimately depend on the nature of its relationship with African interests”.³⁰ It is very critical that African leaders and governments are externally not influenced by self-seeking interests in determining how they should engage with China as much as it should be none of Beijing’s interest to attempt to make themselves appear like the new messiahs, heaven-sent to save Africa from the West. The over-arching interest must lie in the leadership of the continent to take the lead in marrying the interests of both China and the west towards a win-win type of engagement.

3. Theoretical Foundations.

The conduct and behavior of countries, which this paper will interchangeably refer to as nation-states, has been a never-ending debate between international relations theorists for a long time. Much even so difficult because even international relations itself has been defined differently by different scholars depending on the school of thought they favour. However, the paper’s intention is not to define what international relations is but to rely on prevailing defining thoughts of the subject to make an analysis of the matter. It is therefore safe to say that chosen leading theories of international relations being realism and liberalism will form the anchor on which the analysis of this paper will primarily be based. The behavior of China and the US in Africa as well as their reactions towards each other will be analyzed against the main themes of these two theories.

In the context of the realist theory, international politics and the interaction between nation-states is primarily characterized by power and self-interest. As Korab-Karpowicz states

³⁰ Gill, Morrison and Huang, China-Africa Relations: An Early, Uncertain Debate in the United States, 179.

eloquently:

Realists consider the principal actors in the international arena to be states, which are concerned with their own security, act in pursuit of their own national interests, and struggle for power. The negative side of the realists' emphasis on power and self-interest is often their skepticism regarding the relevance of ethical norms to relations among states. National politics is the realm of authority and law, whereas international politics, they sometimes claim, is a sphere without justice, characterized by active or potential conflict among states.³¹

If you then could mirror the above scenario against the nature of interaction between China and the US, not only in Africa, but generally in the realm of global governance, it is fueled by strategic national interests and the struggle for power above everything else. These are the two largest single economies in the world today and their economies are driven by inputs they source from different countries. In that competition for these inputs, which obviously intensifies with time, realists argue that conflict is inevitable and that in itself causes the struggle for power as a means of security. The noticeable increased engagement between China and Africa and the manner in which the US has reacted tend to play into the realist sphere, more so that the US is known to be the best military power today and China is seen to be second largest military expenditure country in the world today.

For their part, liberal theorists argue that there is need to put more emphasis on cooperation to define the nature of interaction between nation-states in the international arena. They dispel the notion that humans are immoral and selfish by nature and they premise the character of a nation on the sum total of the individuals that make it up hence their emphasis that nations are selfish and they can work together peacefully to achieve common purposes in life. They agree with the realist theory on the point that states are primary actors and Cristol summarizes their thought this way:

³¹Korab-Karpowicz, Julian. W, Political Realism in International Relations. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Accessed 01/08/2013. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/realism-intl-relations/>.

(1) States are the primary actors in the international system, but they are not unitary – domestic politics matter; (2) there are factors beyond capabilities that constrain state behavior; and (3) states' interests are multiple and changing. The key concepts found in liberal theory are absolute gains, international institutions, free trade, and democracy. International law is also important in liberal IR theory as it is seen as forming a major constraint on state behavior.³²

Liberal theorists espouse the advantages of cooperation as they are worried by limitations of the lack of it. They argue that the more the states cooperate with each other, on the basis of international law, the less the chances that they would want to go to war with each other over resources which are intrinsically limited by nature. This implies that if China and the US were to look at Africa as an important source of the resources they both need, they would have a desire to see how best they could work together in the continent. Once they have a common understanding, the propensity towards conflict and negative competition would disappear.

Trade, investments and politics of influence are the primary conduits between global economies. Sometimes on the basis of different development orientations, the interaction between countries often dictates the prescriptive nature of engagement which they can adopt. Obviously, the process of interaction would yield varying extents of benefits to different players where in most instances the so-called 'small countries' suffer an imbalance of competition when they come into contact with 'big countries'. In the face of increasing Chinese presence in Africa and the resultant reaction from the West, there is growing tension over the access to the resources, especially energy and mineral resources, offered by the continent. As is true elsewhere, the theories of international relations, such as realism and liberalism, can help provide some guiding insights in terms of how China and United States

³² Cristol, Jonathan, "Liberalism," Oxford Bibliographies. Oxford University Press (2013). <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0060.xml>. Accessed on 01/08/2013.

behave as they interact in Africa. Power and dominance as well as economic prosperity forms the basis on which the interplay between these two powers would unfold and predicting the end result becomes so ever daunting a task.

In realism, the motivation of self-interest and the assumed principle of a zero-sum game, China and the US could be seen to be headed toward a dangerous collision in Africa which would certainly be unhealthy in the sense that it might trigger a race for dominance. Especially given the long-standing differences on the applicability of universal principles such as democracy, fair trade, human rights and economic reforms, any form of cooperation appears to be a distant dream. In this instance, the show of force, primarily through military acquisition, accumulation and sophistication, becomes a chosen path to defend self-interests, which inevitably would heighten the risk of undesirable outcomes such as turf wars. Africa provides for a ripe battleground if the Chinese and US strategic interests were to log into any form of collision.

In liberalism, dictated upon by the overarching assumption that common aspirations and the desire to share the common good creates a platform for cooperation, the propensity to engage in negative competition over resources extremely curtails the appetite for confrontation. There is faith in global governance institutions which are expected to define and set the parameters for engagement between countries irrespective of their size. Such institutions as the WTO, IMF, World Bank and the UN are expected to be avenues for equal interaction between countries, especially in order to protect the voice of small states in the face of intense global competition to access resources and conduct trade between and among each other fairly. While there are known instances where China puts her own interests first, there have been numerous occasions where she has fought hard to align and associate with the interests of the developing world at international institutions, acting in defiance to the

blanket prescriptive tendencies which often are sponsored by the West to safeguard their own selfish interests. The pattern of infrastructure project financing by China in Africa, especially at relatively lower concessionary terms compared to the traditional Western styled conditional assistance, suggest some prospects of mutual cooperation which might eventually fuel the pace of development in both directions. While there is an obvious interest for China to maximize her access to the needed resources in Africa, the fact that she is providing facilitators to development like cheaper infrastructure financing in the continent, the country is seen to be creating a win-win situation instead of a zero-sum game. If other stakeholders could be motivated likewise, the relationship between China and the West could yield an engagement in Africa along mutual benefit and shared growth ambitions. While China is evidently growing as an economic powerhouse in fierce competition with the US, the given fact that their economies have become more intertwined and dependent on each other deeper than before, the known history where dominant powers and rising ones clash in order that changes to the status quo are effected, liberalism offers a window through which such possibilities could be averted.

4. Methodology

The paper used a simple interview process to gather data, both in person and by mail. A set of questions was developed and sent to a select population comprising of academics, diplomats and think tanks, all of which specializes in international relations and foreign policy analysis on China, the US and Africa as well as other places where experts on the issue could be identified. This exercise was also coupled with further archival research to back up the claims. Bearing in mind that international relations theories tend to see and interpret international occurrences differently, the data collected was then filtered through the tenets of

the two leading theories of realism and liberalism to attempt to seek answers to many questions which this paper has put forth.

5. Significance

Despite the fact that the debate about the increased Chinese engagement with Africa and the subsequent reaction to such a development by the Western countries, the US, in particular, has reached a crescendo in recent years, there remains a gap in the literature in terms of how a best possible way forward could be crafted. Most of what is currently available generally emphasizes the need for China and the US to work in an amicable manner together in the continent and beyond. For the most part, they encourage the two economic giants to see each other as partners not only in Africa but the rest of the world. This study will attempt to chart a new way forward in proposing a set of recommendations which call upon Africa, China and the US to formalize a tripartite cooperation agreement covering a range of critical issues including trade, development aid, military pacts, socio-economic and political sectors. In common international relations and foreign policy parlance, allies have no appetite for going to war with each other. Given the enormity of what is at stake, a formal cooperation agreement between Africa, China and the US would prove to be a long term deterrent of any tendency of aggression towards each other and encourage working together towards a common purpose instead. As a result, African policy makers would need to be in a good position to define clearly the nature of engagement they want with both China and the US without falling into the trap of alienating one at the expense of another. They can do so by formulating policies that bring the US and China to the same table with respect to critical areas of engagement which they are currently pursuing separately.

6. Emerging Key Themes from Collected Data

A very well diverse selected constituency of experts and practitioners on Chinese, American and African foreign relations responded strongly to the interview questionnaire which was dispatched as part of data gathering to answer the research questions of this paper. Several key themes, as a result, emerged and the paper would like to summarize them as follows;

1. The heightened Chinese and American engagement in Africa is a positive development, both politically and economically. Africa gets the opportunity to diversify her markets and sources of goods and services while at the same time China and the US are presented with a great opportunity to work together towards rebuilding of African economies and political institutions.
2. China is not necessarily becoming a superpower in the form of hegemonic geopolitics to replace the US but she will keep on growing strong and rising as an influential player in global affairs, effectively keeping second position for several decades to come.
3. The United States and China can work together peacefully in the continent contrary to some observations in certain quarters that their contact would potentially lead to sources of friction and eventually conflict. In fact it appears the emergence of China in Africa has pushed the United States out of their comfort zone, to look at Africa afresh as an important development partner.
4. Equally, to the Europeans as are the Americans, the Chinese encroachment into Africa has highlighted several key points of information about Africa's endowment and potential. China has explored extra sources of new natural

resources and they are leading in many contractual projects in the continent and the other industrial powers are getting a fright that China would do what they failed to do in the continent whilst they still had the chance to do so.

5. While it is too early to confirm and prove that African governments and leaders are in a good shape and position to handle this new romance, signs are encouraging as more and more academics and other experts join government in the continent. The populations are also getting more enlightened which helps the opposition in different African capitals to demand more and better from government.
6. With respect to threats and challenges to international peace and the global economy, the entrance of China in the African fray has the potential to reduce economic inequalities and enhance the continent's participation in international trade far much better than it has been the case so far. There is not so much threat to international peace provided the US and China could cooperate and work together peacefully in the continent.
7. To position Africa well to benefit from the US –China tussle, the governments and leaders must ensure that Africans take the lead in deciding the terms of reference by consulting thoroughly and with transparency to set the goals and policies that should guide the relationship. Regional bodies in the continent, especially the African Union, must also build common goals and policies to protect countries from potential exploitation and corruption.
8. Given the fact that Africa is merely a geographical concept, not a social, political, economic, or cultural entity, finding a common solution to the potential problems

that may arise as a result of Chinese – American contact in the continent will certainly prove to be difficult. As such it would be useful to define and deal with individual societies and individual traditions within the context of current political realities to guide and accommodate the peculiarities of varying needs.

7. Analysis: Insights and Recommendations.

The paper does not advocate for anything significantly new or a radical shift from the norm but attempts to make a case for a ‘new Africa’ that is able to use existing international socio-economic and political infrastructure to ensure that her interests are well-safeguarded and also optimally enhanced. As they say, you cannot throw the babe away with its dirty bath water, and it shall speak with that perspective when scrutinizing the failed policies which the West has always prescribed for Africa. As much as they have not yielded any significant results in most cases, some of the policies were well thought out but only got to fail at the stage of implementation. Same could be said of some of the current Chinese policies towards Africa in the sense that they also have their own shortcomings which could also be addressed to appropriate better outcomes for the continent. From the responses to the interview questionnaire that was dispatched and individual one-on-one interviews conducted, this section will attempt to make a case for a different approach towards Africa by the Chinese and the West.

7.1 Trade to Replace Aid

In many occasions, we have seen the West especially the US and the EU make lofty pronouncements about facilitating the capacity of Africa to take her place in the international

trade game of cards. However, commendable efforts as they have been, Africa still struggles to penetrate their markets. Realism sees trade relations between countries hinged on selfish interests with the primary inclination of amassing resources to build economic might. The purpose is to gain political domination which shall be made possible by military strength and other forms of persuasion. As a result, trade relations will always favour the most powerful of the world and through various strategic maneuverings they will ensure that they remain on the positive side of the equilibrium at all times. Some observers argue that at the end of the day, trade related offers and opportunities created by Western countries are a mere guise to create free passages to access resources in Africa.

In 2001, the US Congress authorized the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, commonly referred to as AGOA, granting Duty-free/Quota-free access for all agricultural and other products from sub-Saharan Africa. However, it has proven to be such a mammoth task for Africa to export agricultural products to the US because of stringent restrictions. A considerable percentage of Africa still relies heavily on agriculture and they have been made to sweat in order that they could fully benefit from the initiative. Obviously if some of these restrictions could be dealt away with, a spike on agricultural exports to the US would ensue which in turn would boost market growth in the continent and lead to economic growth and development. The EU too, through the Lome Convention and Cotonou Agreement, have moved to facilitate access for African products into their markets but still many countries are finding it tough to do business in Europe. Statistics show a picture of a one-way trade route where Africa only exports raw materials to the West and China at very low prices only to get in return very expensive finished goods from the other side.

A leading global not-for-profit organization called ONE made a very good point in saying that;

One of the most important tools in the fight against poverty is trade. Africa needs to increase its ability to export in order to be able to finance its own development. In addition to agricultural subsidies, access to developed country markets for African products continues to be limited. Quotas limit the quantity of products that may enter a certain market, while tariffs often make products too expensive to compete. Sometimes tariffs on processed goods are higher, making it more difficult for Africans to move into higher value manufacturing.³³

Now with the increasing presence of and engagement with China, a similar arrangement to AGOA could be considered to facilitate maximum access to the Chinese and East Asia market by African products. This could certainly provide a diversified market given the fact that certain products from Sub-Saharan Africa are excluded from the US' AGOA framework, to assist in enhancing the comparative advantage held by the respective producer countries. For example, as Goldstein, Pinand and Reisen put it, "in clothing, for instance, a comprehensive revision of rules of origins should be undertaken so as to increase the effectiveness of such schemes as the AGOA and Everything But Arms, and ensure their ability to cushion effectively the impact of China's competition".³⁴ Most of the African countries exporting textile and apparel products to the US under AGOA rely on Asian markets including China to source their primary inputs. Effectively that is the point where competition with China begins even before putting together a single garment in preparation for export. In addition, the bulk of African exports to the US is made up of oil and minerals and given the fact that China is also targeting the same products in the continent, it should provide a bargaining power on the side of Africa to get better terms from either side. Africa also must act as to prove they are in full control of the situation but not in a manner that pits the US and China in a confrontational platform.

³³ONE, The African Growth and Opportunity Act. <http://www.one.org/c/us/issuebrief/746>. Accessed on 10/9/2013.

³⁴Goldstein, Andrea, Pinand, Nicolas and Reisen, Helmut, China's Boom: What's in it for Africa? A Trade Perspective, 50.

Another way to help Africa become more competitive in the international trade scene would be through the provision of technical assistance to address the supply-side constraints such as infrastructure development, new farming technologies, and specific trade – related capacity building needs. Using Angola as an example, Cooke argues that the country “seeks assistance from multiple partners on development, pandemic diseases, de-mining, technical assistance, and assistance that enhances trade. There is no point in liberalizing trade if developing countries cannot benefit because of supply-side constraints. The United States and China can have a complimentary role if they continue to provide credit for projects that enhance trade capacity”.³⁵ This type of support should also target regional infrastructure projects that are crucial in supporting the current regional economic integration among various economic regional groupings in the continent. For Africa, improved agricultural productivity and profitability are cardinal in improving economic development. There is need for continued and concerted efforts to address barriers to market access and penetration, such as poor market infrastructure and market awareness, ineffective industrial policies and restrictive rules of origin.

As it stands at the moment, agricultural subsidies in the US and the low cost of manufacturing labour in China combine to hamper and hurt Africa’s trade capacity. For instance, the US and other leading Western countries heavily subsidize their farmers which makes it extremely difficult for African farm products to compete in the global market. Most of Africa’s economies are predominantly agriculture-based and many still rely on rudimentary means of production which goes further to weaken their competitiveness.

³⁵Cooke, Jennifer, U.S.-China Engagement in Africa: Prospects for Improving U.S.-China-Africa Cooperation, 27.

In China, given their huge labour availability and the low cost of labour related to that, they stifle competition from African economies which engage in like sectors through massive production capacity and the migration of the factors of production. As a result, African small and medium enterprises struggle to compete and eventually collapse. For example, the expiration of the Multi Fibre Agreement (MFA) in 2005, which removed the imposition of restrictions on China's textile and apparel trade, saw an explosion of Chinese activity in the industry, which hurt a lot of small African economies. Prior to the expiration of the MFA, small economies like Lesotho, Mauritius and Botswana, for example, had cut their teeth into the textile and apparel industry, taking advantage of AGOA to export duty free/quota free to the United States, which they did by forming business partnerships with East Asian textile companies. Once the restrictions were gone, all the East Asian companies, including Chinese, fled back home because there was no longer an incentive for them to stay in Africa since they would still have direct access to the US and other markets on their own. Writing about the consequences of this development, Mutume puts it thus;

all across Africa, textile producers and exporters are reeling from the impact of new trade rules that took effect in January 2005. The rules, negotiated at the World Trade Organization (WTO), opened up to market forces a sector that had been protected for more than 30 years. It did so by ending a quota system in industrial nations which as a side effect has provided a ready market for textiles and apparel from poor African countries and other developing countries.³⁶

As the realist theory vehemently states, it appears too easy to qualify the fact that countries will always look at national interest first and act in a manner that amplifies their benefit maximization. However, this fact seems to favor the already powerful and economically advanced at the expense of others. In this case, Africa generally would suffer

³⁶Mutume, Gumisai, Loss of Textile Market Costs African Jobs. Africa Renewal Online. April 2006.

<http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2006/loss-textile-market-loss-african-jobs>.

Accessed 21/11/2013.

because of her peculiar weaknesses in the international trade arena because of lack of capacity and underdeveloped technological know-how. In the case of both China and the US working to maximize their access to Africa's resources, there lies some dangers which might complicate even further the ability of the continent to notch up towards an aid free continent and be coming a true player in international trade. However, the deliberate suffocation of Africa's ability to trade competitively leads to undesired consequences. Le Pere captures that "the dumping of cheap Chinese imports and the displacement of local products, especially clothing and textiles, has aroused growing anti-Chinese sentiment and popular resentment in many African countries".³⁷ The effects of China's trade engagement with Africa does not very much differ from that customary engagement between Africa and the West in terms of improving the capacity of the continent to effectively achieve balanced trade with the rest of the world. Logically it shall follow that the more competitive China and the US scramble for raw materials from Africa, the continent should be better served to reap maximum worth of their resources rather than being played into a hegemonic check and balance game motivated by power and selfish interest.

For a counterbalance, the liberal school of thought would gain a lot of favour in recommending an institutionalized engagement between countries to avoid incidences where others gain at the expense of others. This arrangement through established international institutions on the basis of clearly drawn rules of engagement to safeguard the interests of the weak would curtail the appetite for false competition over resources hence enables the poor countries play fair for their benefit. Pursuing their interests but in a rational all-parties engagement would make the US and China look responsible and prove the worth of their

³⁷ Le Pere, Garth, *The Geo-Strategic Dimensions of the Sino-African Relationship*, 31.

public pronouncements that they want to help Africa to become independent economically. To marry the competing interests of China and the West, Le Pere advises that “African countries must become more involved in insisting on harmonization of donor activity in Africa in such a manner that international and bilateral donors systematically share data and develop complementary approaches with China”.³⁸ Coordination of donor activity would certainly help to rechanneling the limited aid resources appropriately and in the process enabling African countries to dedicate more resources towards trade enablers rather than giving up to the fate of a perpetual beggar continent. International institutions like the World Bank and IMF and other private entities continuously undertake capacity studies in the continent. It would, therefore, prove worthwhile to reconcile some of their findings to devise strategic responses to Africa’s limitations so that a well-coordinated and systematic path could be spelt out that brings leading development partners like the US and China to working together for a common purpose.

7.2 Regional Economic Integration

Efforts to economically integrate the continent come from a long way back in history. However, in most instances, the efforts have mostly come in the complexion which is largely reflected more of an affinity than a strong bite to create a coherent economic wagon that could be driven to integrate deeper and grow the economies more. In the words of Faroutan, “most integration schemes were adopted after independence during the period that goes from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. In many instances, the groupings comprised countries which had shared colonial ties to the same foreign power because the colonial ties had created a host of common institutions, a common official language, and a common currency.

³⁸ Le Pere, *The Geo-Strategic Dimensions of the Sino-African Relationship*, 34.

In other instances, the regional groupings, notably the larger ones, were more in line with the geographic proximity of the member countries”.³⁹ While this could have been a good and probably the most legitimate development at the time to create a common understanding at the foundation, it has dragged on longer than necessary and in the process helped create delays to transcend the mindset of the immediate post-colonial era. The time has now come for these regional groupings to become more pragmatic and practical in their approaches. Recognizing the fact that the failure of regional economic communities in Africa have been attributable to resources constraints, donor countries, including the US and China, could do a great deal by creating a platform where Africa could establish new content in terms of how these groupings could be made to become more effective.

The ability to export to external markets and to maintain the capacity and even improve on it depends on the strength of the local and regional markets. Part of the problem why Africa has made piecemeal inroads into the international trade grid borrows a lot from the continent’s incoherent economic integration at all levels. According to Qobo:

it is widely acknowledged that Africa’s integration efforts have thus far failed to bear fruit. While other regions have successfully used their integration mechanisms to improve their economic welfare, Africa lags behind with respect to GDP growth, per capita income, capital inflows, and general living standards. This is a problem across most of the continent, in spite of the existence of a plethora of policy plans and grand visions.⁴⁰

Regional integration means far much more than merely meeting in one capital city and agreeing that you have a Free Trade Agreement (FTAs) or a common Customs Union. What matters is the effective and efficient implementation of the statutes, translating them

³⁹Faroutan, Faezeh, Regional Integration in Sub-Saharan Africa: Experience and Prospects, 3.

⁴⁰Qobo, Mzukisi, The Challenges of Regional Integration in Africa: In the Context of Globalisation for a United States of Africa.

www.dspace.cigilibrary.org/jspui/biysream/123456789/31112/1/PAPER145H.pdf?1

from aspirations into reality to create wealth for your people. A unified and harmonized region gives immediate confidence to local producers even before potential foreign investors could be considered. The facilitation that enables the movement of goods and people across borders is the primary cornerstone for ensuring that businesses can easily access each other's markets and also to create a healthy competitive and open environment.

One of the most important aspects of regional integration entails infrastructure development in addition to harmonization of legislative instruments related to trade and industrial policies. While some countries have actually urged a head making efforts to improve their internal infrastructure complexion, a lot more others still lag behind and this development has made for a difficult case for effective integration despite the commitment shown across the continent to do so. Hartzenberg posited that "Africa continues to engage at the periphery of the global economy, as evident from the continent's declining share in global production and trade".⁴¹ Of course there is a new trail of regional and joint infrastructure projects including highways and rail-roads to connect major economic centres in the continent but the effort will need to be stepped up a little. The cost of transportation of goods from one area to another has proven to be a serious challenge in the continent because of poor road networks and unless this problem is addressed immediately the continent will have to wait a little longer to first, trade within and secondly, to penetrate external markets at a healthy profit. This point is emphasized by Oyejide, attributing the sluggish expansion of the economic integration pace in the continent to notable structural obstacles peculiar to Africa. According to him, among such obstacles are "the small size of the typical African economy, the fact that many of them are landlocked and therefore need the cooperation of their coastal

⁴¹Hartzenberg, Trudi, Regional Integration in Africa, 3.

neighbours for a more effective integration with the global economy, and the relatively poor state of their infrastructure services (especially transport and communication)".⁴² China's increasing investment in Africa's infrastructure projects is highly commendable but it should be done more at creating effective and efficient connectivity between African countries than primarily focusing on bilateral efforts.

For the purposes of targeting foreign invested companies, regional integration can never be paralleled in transmitting the requisite confidence to potential investors because it gives a bang on the size of the market, both from the supply and demand sides of the equation. From the supply side, a potential investor is immediately greeted by a wide variety of choice in terms of sourcing inputs with no restrictions from any member country. From the demand side such an investor now enjoys a considerable consumer base because their finished products will now be available in all countries all at once and that should be good business and a win-win scenario at all times. Carrying the debate forward, de Melo and Tsikata encourage that "small fragmented and isolated economies with resources distributed very unequally among them make a compelling case for African countries to integrate regionally to reap efficiency gains, exploit scale economies, and reduce the thickness of borders".⁴³ Once this happens, wealth generation will exponentially expand and the businesses enjoy further boom. At the end you will have an Africa that is able to produce and consume locally before it ventures into the world outside and the Africa that meets the world is a totally different Africa that is assertive and can hold her own on the international trade and investment scene.

⁴² Oyejide, Ademola. T, Policies for Regional Integration in Africa, 1.

⁴³ De Melo, Jaime and Tsikata, Yvonne, Regional Integration in Africa: Challenges and Prospects. www.portal.unu.edu/news/7792

A good amount of development assistance which the continent receives from development partners must be channeled towards regional projects. Donors too must refocus and drive their aid towards these projects because they have better chance of benefitting a lot of people who need them the most than give to individuals governments. Development partners should support the development of regional integration and regional value chains. The US and China should be encouraged to work collaboratively with African governments and regional institutions, non-governmental organizations and businesses, as well as other countries and international institutions, to design policies and programs that address Africa's priorities. Oyedije observes that "a rather robust consensus seems to have developed around the broad conclusion that Africa's regional integration schemes have not succeeded in expanding intra-African trade, increased Africa's total trade or enhancing the region's overall economic growth through the expansion of intra-regional trade".⁴⁴ A combined US-China drive towards helping the continent to address growth-defeating bottlenecks could have more impact if carried out on a more broad and regional undertaking, taking into consideration what individual countries could potentially bring to the table given their numerous and different capacities and capabilities at their disposal. In this instance, Chipeta argues that "according to the principle of comparative advantage, the gains from trade are likely to be larger where more countries, offering a larger market and greater scope for specialization, are involved in trade than where trade is taking place between two countries".⁴⁵ Africa has the requisite policy infrastructure in place and only what needs to be done is to translate them into tangible vehicles that could lead to deeper integration and in return more economic

⁴⁴Oyedije, *Policies for Regional Integration in Africa*, 28.

⁴⁵Chipeta, Chinyamata, *Trade and Investment in Southern Africa: Towards Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration*, 10.

growth and development. Helping African countries to take advantage of their known natural resources by trading more with each other has the power to unleash the potential of the continent to play a key and more of a partner role in the global economic and trade activities.

For Africa to fully integrate into the international trading system, first and foremost, the continent would have to ensure market integration within her boundaries before she could embark on the outside world. Trade statistics indicate that there is very little trade activity between African economies despite the fact that there has been a proven need for them to do so, given the exponential growth that may result as a consequence. Making their case, UNECA writes that:

African countries have a fairly long history of repeated attempts to group themselves – in sub-groups and even Africa-wide – through several broad types of arrangements. Many researchers have argued that regional integration and cooperation are the most appropriate way to improve weak intra-Africa trade as well as internal (domestic) trade. Many of the more popular arguments rest heavily on the possibilities of generating large economies of scale from activities typically associated with expanded trade and overall economic growth in a country.⁴⁶

The foreign policies of the United States and China towards Africa differ significantly, especially politically, which arguably further defines the complexion of their economic interests in the continent. On one hand, the US favors the global spread of democratic ideals, good governance, and the respect of the rule of law which dictates that they will choose and pick which countries they want to work with while isolating others. For the Chinese, they assume the position of non-interference in internal affairs of other countries which makes it easy for them to work with each and every country in Africa irrespective of the kind of regimes in place. Within this context, the two countries enjoy varying degrees of entry and acceptance by different African leadership and governments.

⁴⁶ UNECA, Assessing Regional Integration in Africa V: Towards an African Continental Free Trade Area. www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/publications/aria5_print_uneca_fin_20_july_1.pdf.

Traditionally, the so-called democratic countries normally trend towards the US and Europe as most still do the same towards China but those ones perceived to be undemocratic and authoritarian tend to enjoy the warmth of the Chinese and are shunned by the West. Given the excessive need for Africa to work with development partners to improve her cross-border infrastructure, it is proving too difficult to effectively pursue such ambitions because of opposing interests between China and the US. A reconciliation of these two countries in the continent would create a platform for meaningful engagement that would benefit the people instead of focusing on punishing certain regimes.

In accordance with the assumptions of the realist theories that politics of hegemony and power precede any decision by a particular country to interact with others, it would appear that regional economic integration would certainly occur if the most powerful members believe it will work in their favour. National security and survival overshadows the creation of mutually beneficial regional structures, which further complicates regional approaches to engagement with other key external players, in this case China and the United States. In the process a recipe for 'rule and divide' takes root because it shall follow that the pursuit of selfish national interest would give the most powerful countries to cause alignment with individual benefits rather the provision of regional public goods. In the event where the United States and China fight over influence over a particular country in line with their narrow national interests, the prospects of effective regional economic integration in Africa becomes merely a matter of aspiration not reality. Particularly with the United States, committing to assisting in broad regional needs has always been an issue for concern because they channel their aid assistance according to which countries subscribe to their universal understanding and interpretation of democracy, good governance and the respect of the rule of law. The eventual outcome is to marginalize certain countries which make it impossible for

such countries to be involved in the dialogue, creating untenable state of relations between neighboring countries.

Regional economic integration can only be possible and beneficial if the imbalance of infrastructure development in Africa is eliminated. Most of the regional integration efforts in the continent are often defeated by divided backing of the West and China along lines of selfish interests. To illustrate this point, the US has over the years come up with capacity building measures geared towards helping Africa but they have often fallen short of impact because they are usually extended to friendly member countries in isolation of others. For example, the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), a United States capacity building initiative, selectively addresses internal economic constraints in certain countries which have to qualify by being allies to the West while it excludes those which are deemed unfriendly. The end result is a situation where other countries develop faster ahead of others creating an imbalance of capabilities economically. In the process, it inhibits the potential of unleashing even the minimum output that the continent is capable of yielding. Instead of singling out certain countries and isolating them, the most powerful of the world like the US and China should consider channeling their development aid to Africa through regional economic communities so that they could benefit all countries more equitably.

In general terms, the liberal theorists would treat regional economic integration as one of the best initiatives where society and government interact to set common guidelines for cooperation with other countries. A well-thought out regional framework that benefits all equally according to their own limitations would pave way for a climate of collaboration, doing away with the tendencies of geopolitical positioning to dominate others. In the context of Africa, a coherent regional integration system would also minimize the appetite for China and the United States to jostle for spheres of dominance thus forcing them to play along and

not according to what African people and governments deem appropriate and acceptable by regional standards. This aspect further calls upon the requisite calibre of leadership in the continent to know exactly what Africa needs as Qobo argues it very well when he contends that:

It would seem that Africa's elites are focusing on the wrong set of priorities with too little genuine commitment towards the goal of Africa's development. For regional integration in Africa to be a success, Africa's leaders will have to move beyond grand gestures and abstract visions. Africa's challenges call for pragmatism and a sense of urgency in action. More focused and gradual steps that are carefully executed at the domestic level may be the best place to start.⁴⁷

Paying too much lip service to actions which cannot be achieved is meaningless, and the imperative is such that African leaders need to exploit the benefits of international goodwill they have at their disposal, to create home-made implementable action plans towards regional integration efforts. Already exist a number of initiatives towards this goal but the time has come for Africa to engage both China and the US to come up with a comprehensive blueprint that will guide how the continent goes about realizing the dream of an economically compact region.

7.3 Foreign Direct Investment

Attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows has become the holy grail of Africa's economic development. FDI is one of the most effective ways of enabling a country to grow its industrial base because first, it injects the much needed capital to boost economic growth and generate employment opportunities along the way. Secondly, for Africa, it is one single important way of ensuring skills and technology transfers to modernize the way business is done in the continent. However, as OECD observes, if the problem of attracting

⁴⁷Qobo, Mzukisi, The Challenges of Regional Integration in Africa.

www.dspace.cigilibrary.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/31112/1/PAPER145H.pdf?1.

FDI inflows into the continent is not attended it “threatens to prolong and increase their marginalization and prevent their economies intermediating meaningfully, with attendant advantages, in the present process of globalization”.⁴⁸ It is really troubling that a continent so rich in resources has been turned into a mere mine of resources and plays no significant role in the international value chain except to harvest raw materials and ship them across the oceans. Imagining how value addition being done at the source of raw materials could have a multiplier effect, with an exponential avenue for job creation, income generation and wealth accumulation could do to transform Africa, one can only say that the continent has left it a little too late. All is not lost though as Goldstein, Pinand and Reisen remain optimistic about future prospects. While accounting for the entry of Beijing into the equation, they concur that “the sheer size of China’s economy, its phenomenal rate of growth, its appetite for natural resources, and its growing economic and political power augur that it will reshape the world economy and provide both competition and opportunities across the board to major trading partners in OECD countries, to developing countries and to other emerging economies”.⁴⁹ Perhaps out of this competition a more balanced game will emerge as sources and markets become diversified, allowing Africa to also have an increased voice in determining her own partners.

For Africa to attract more FDI inflows, sleeves will have to be rolled and work get done by being proactive and developing effective value proposition targeting instruments with specific and clear cut messages to potential investors. It is one thing to establish an Investment Promotion Agency (IPA) and another to run it like a professional entity with well-

⁴⁸Dan, Liang, Creating Efficient Networking and Effective Linkages in Investment Promotion.(OECD), 2002. <http://www.oecd.org/daf/inv/investmentfordevelopment/2764452.pdf>. Accessed 7/9/2013.

⁴⁹Goldstein, Pinand and Reisen, China’s Boom: What’s in it for Africa? A Trade Perspective, 29.

groomed human capital trained to the core of business marketing and investment promotion. There is a tendency across the continent where these IPAs are set up and then get populated with political cronies who know nothing about business acumen and the results are always disastrous all over the place.

Country branding as an image enhancer should also be treated as a powerful tool of communication because increased visibility keeps people thinking and also attracts new suitors. This is also one area where African countries are failing. A once off road show in the United States in five years will never be enough to sell any country's investment opportunities to potential investors. The effort needs to be concerted and funded fully with a strong base of coordination, monitoring, evaluation and follow up. To promote a country as a destination of choice to potential investors is not a one off expedition but a continuous process that requires many years of concentration.

There is no doubt that the whirlwind of globalization has created a more complex environment for determining the channels and direction of FDI inflows let alone the potential locations where to settle capital given the expanding flexibility of production and accumulation. While this has come to undermine the traditional texture of attracting FDI like location suitability, availability of inputs, consumer market size and returns to labor, the trend could be slowed down. Resource-rich African countries, without any doubt, if they were to put proper institutional structures in place, stand a good chance of wielding a bigger say in influencing the decisions of big conglomerates in settling in Africa. To support this observation, Le Pere argues that:

China cannot be blamed or be held accountable for the absence of or weak regulatory mechanisms and administrative systems. It is the responsibility of African governments to ensure fair and equitable business practices, for example, having in place competition laws and policies to prevent the abuses and uncompetitive behavior of which Chinese companies and small-medium traders are so often

accused.⁵⁰

By proper institutional structures, this paper refers to the establishment of resilient industrial policies which not only look to attract investors but also to ensure a healthy degree of sustainability, retention and further diversification of production bases beyond just extraction and harvesting of raw materials and shipping them to Europe, US and China. Habib captures it well when he highlights that “if there is a lesson to be learnt by Africa, it is not only about creating favourable conditions for FDI in Africa; it is also about the value of pragmatism and of knowing how to leverage to condition the behavior of foreign governments and investors, so that they are compatible with poverty alleviation and development”.⁵¹ In most cases, foreign companies are merely driven by the desire to make profits, not necessarily to help host countries in tackling some of the pressing developmental issues that they face. However, it is possible that governments of donor countries could have some leverage in influencing some of their companies to consider certain parts of Africa as ripe for capital injections but it could also help even further if African countries demonstrate their readiness to play ball. Hartzenberg raises a very good point in saying that:

Most of Africa's countries have low per capita income levels and small populations which result in small markets. In 2008, 12 SSA states had populations of less than 2 million while 19 had a gross domestic product (GDP) of less than US\$5 billion, six of which had a GDP of less than US\$1 million. Not only are most SSA economies small and poor, but 15 are also landlocked, an important contributory factor to high trade transaction costs, and more generally to the high cost of doing business in Africa”.⁵²

Bemoaning the state of Africa's investment climate is meaningless if concrete and implementable solutions to knock off the bottlenecks are not devised and vigorously pursued.

⁵⁰ Le Pere, *The Geo-Strategic Dimensions of the Sino-African Relationship*, 36.

⁵¹Habib, Adama, *Western Hegemony, Asian Ascendancy and the New Scramble for Africa*, 267.

⁵²Hartzenberg, Trudi, *Regional Integration In Africa*, 3.

There is need to emphasize the impact of lasting frameworks that would see more and more foreign investors from China and the US flock to Africa, not as mere traders but also true investors to set up shop in the continent. These countries need to incentivize their investors to encourage them go to Africa, not only with profit in their minds but also to contribute to other needs like employment creation, technology transfer and nurturing small and medium businesses use spill-over effects to grow into major industries locally. One way of doing so is by transferring portions of multinational corporations' operations to Africa from their home bases in line with the worth of their investments in the continent, and this is possible. However, from a commercial point of view, liberalism does not overemphasize the significance of economic incentives as a miracle pill to push foreign investors from rich countries to Africa and other needy regions of the world. They argue that it may not necessarily be the purpose that it is being intended to attract investors but also that it is important that it may help liberalize trade and simultaneously create positive production and distributional benefits across Africa.

Foreign direct investment, especially when directed to the sources of the factors of production, carries huge beneficiation advantages which can transform the complexion of a country's economic capacity and further its trade transaction returns. By way of example, the Diamond Trading Centre (DTC) relocated its main operations to Botswana from the United Kingdom in 2008, which was properly in line with the fact that Botswana is currently the largest producer of gem diamonds in the world. The result of this relocation has been the creation of thousands of job opportunities in the country and instead of just extracting rough diamonds from the ground and sending them for further processing and value addition in Europe, they are now cut, polished and turned into consumable goods right in location where they come from.

Further, there is an interesting observation which is worth discussing in this paper. There is a common understanding that without the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) there would be no smartphone and other electronic devices as we know them today. A very rare earth metal, only and currently presumed to be available from the DRC called tantalum or coltan provides for the basis for the breakthrough that has given birth to mobile devices revolution. Meyer was prompted to illustrate the wealth of the DRC in a composite summary as follows:

It is a profound irony that Congo, rated by the IMF as the world's poorest country, is widely regarded as the world's richest in natural resources with wealth estimated at \$24 trillion. Much of this wealth is buried in mineral deposits whose size is a catalog of hyperbolic: Congo is the 5th leading producer of tungsten and 6th of tin, holds 5% of the world's copper and 50% of cobalt. Moreover Congo possesses an estimated 80% of all known coltan which, refined as tantalum, is vital component of computers, personal electronics, and the world's 5.6 billion mobile phones".⁵³

What is interesting, even further disturbing, is the fact that there is not a single major mobile electronics company operating out of the DRC at the moment. In this context it sounds logical that leading mobile electronics companies like Apple and Samsung, for example, should at least have some form of investment in DRC so that the people of that country could fully benefit from the consumption of resources, some of which only their country supplies to the rest of the world. Instead, as a new trend, you find all these major mobile electronics companies choose to locate their investment capital in China at the expense of the source. As Xinbo correctly points out, "since the 1980s, the United States has been a major economic partner for China, and China's economic development has benefited a lot from the United States in terms of exports, foreign direct investment (FDI) and

⁵³ Meyer, Nathan. W, Can China's 'Deal of the Century' Save Congo? World Policy Institute. July 2012. <http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2012/07/19/can-china%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98deal-century%E2%80%99-save-congo>. Accessed 21/11/2013.

introduction of new technologies”.⁵⁴ This actually demonstrates that Africa has the opportunity to grow her economies and develop in the same manner that China has done. It is therefore important for African governments to realize that the time has come for them to position themselves along the lines of the advantages they possess in order to influence the decisions and location of global capitalists in their favour. Le Pere, also citing the case of DRC, postulates that “Chinese engagement in the Congo has the possibility of benefiting some Congolese, but also the possibility of perpetuating harmful practices and networks established by European and American forerunners. Despite improvements in infrastructure, Chinese money contributes to the resilience of the links between external capital and disregard for the population in the DRC”.⁵⁵ This point is further given more weight by Ndulo, in this instance invoking the case of Zambia and argues that “the major issue that arises in the context of Chinese investments in Zambia is whether the two countries can work constructively together to ensure that this is a win-win situation for both and what policies and mechanisms can be put in place to ensure this result”.⁵⁶ As much as the continent yearns for FDI in flows from capital economies, it is also imperative that Africa also develops the ability to let out FDI to flow to other regions of the world especially to developed countries like the West and strongly emerging economies like China. This can only happen if big multinational companies from countries such as China and the US could find it to be appropriate to relocate considerable portions of their operations to Africa to facilitate the growth of domestic production and export capacity in the continent. This move would further boost the growth of African companies which can eventually lead to them being able to do

⁵⁴Xinbo, Wu, Chinese Visions of the Future of U.S. –China Relations, 371.

⁵⁵ Le Pere, The Geo-Strategic Dimensions of the Sino-African Relationship, 103.

⁵⁶ Ndulo, Muna, Chinese Investments in Africa: A case Study of Zambia, 143.

business competitively on the international scene.

7.4 Peace and Security

Realist theorists make people to believe that countries are preoccupied with their own security since there is no global authority to enforce order because they always remain suspicious of each other's military capabilities. Such capabilities or lack of them create a scenario where the scramble for resources to keep on building the might lends itself to creating an environment of conflict. Given the fact that Africa sits on vast endowment of resources it would appear very obvious the de facto two superpowers of China and the United States would find themselves in the continent in pursuit of resources, especially energy and mineral resources, which may create a clash of strategic interests if left unchecked. If it were to happen that way then it would compromise the improvement of peace and security in the continent.

There is no doubt that political instability has plagued the continent for the good part of the years ever since independence but it must be noted that the situation has significantly improved and keeps on improving every day. Whether negative political situations act counter to the ability of the continent to attract, for example FDI inflows, one thing is obvious that such situations negatively affect the development of the continent because wherever there is conflict it means a total collapse of institutional infrastructure. Once the structures collapse the chances of infiltration by bad elements like radical terrorist groups, money launderers and drug trafficking cartels become dangerously high. While China and the U.S differ significantly on their foreign policies towards Africa, especially the latter's concern that the former seems to engage indiscriminately with African governments, Cooke makes a valid point when says that:

China's principle of non interference will be increasingly tested in unstable, conflicted settings, opening new opportunities for cooperation on conflict resolution and collective international pressure on governments in energy-producing states to invest in long-term stability and good governance. Should the government of Nigeria become seriously engaged in addressing long-standing grievances in the Niger Delta, both the United States and China would have a shared interest in supporting an effective solution and each would bring special strengths to a potential resolution and reconstruction strategy.⁵⁷

Nigeria is one of Africa's biggest economies with strong political influence in the region and it should go without saying that an unstable Nigeria poses potential threats to regional instability. Since the country is also one of the largest suppliers of energy needs to both China and the United States, this common security interest shall provide a platform for cooperation of which the multiplier effect would spill over to other sectors like better trade and investment environment. Glaser sees the need for increased cooperation when he says:

after 9/11, the U.S has intensified its efforts to combat terrorism at home and abroad, and sought to cooperate with a large number of countries, including China. A U.S. – China counterterrorism dialogue was established in which both sides seek to address terrorism with whole-of-government approach. Cooperation has been strengthened on anti-money laundering and counter-financing of terrorism investigations.⁵⁸

Africa provides the best place for this cooperation to be tested because of the potential of safe havens for terrorists in the continent because of ineffective policing capabilities. From these safe havens, in the long run after establishing themselves in one place they now have the opportunity to spread across the continent and most of the countries are not able to detect and repel these elements effectively because it demands a lot of investment, both in technology and manpower.

Africa has the opportunity to harness the assistance of the US and China to help develop and reinforce peace and stability in the continent. One best opportunity lies in the

⁵⁷Cooke, U.S. and China Engagement in Africa: Prospects for Improving U.S. – China – Africa Cooperation, 6.

⁵⁸Glaser, Bonnie. G, The Diplomatic Relationship: Substance and Process, 151.

AFRICOM, a unified military command post for Africa which the US has been struggling to sell to African governments with little success for some time now. Not a single country has committed to hosting the command post so far, perhaps as a result of a general distaste towards the US foreign policy and the suspected covert intentions to police and undertake surveillance on certain countries in the continent, including the growing Chinese presence. A top US Commander, Todd A. Hofstedt, in 2009 wrote in the Naval War College Review that “the recent expansion of Chinese activity in Africa has raised several concerns, ranging from control over energy resources to exploitive economic practices and support of rogue or corrupt regimes, perpetuating instability and undermining international pressure for reform”.⁵⁹ This is a clear concern which the US has had over China’s activities in the continent, which further makes it even difficult to sell the proposal to African states effectively. It also makes for China to believe that part of the strategy is to create the capacity by the US to perform clandestine surveillance on Chinese interests in the continent. However, given the sophistication of the US military, there is no doubt that such a project would bring with it a lot of advantages including ICT and other cutting edge technologies which could help revamp the continent’s ICT infrastructure. At the genesis of AFRICOM initiative in 2006, the then US President George W Bush said it “will enhance our efforts to bring peace and security to the people of Africa and promote our common goals of development, health, education, democracy, and economic growth in Africa”, quoted by Sgt. Sara Wood of U.S Department of State⁶⁰. Except for the doubts over the real motive behind AFRICOM, the

⁵⁹Hofstedt, Todd. A, China in Africa: An AFRICOM Response: The Naval War College Review, Summer 2009, Vol. 62, And No.3. <http://www.usnwc.edu/getattachment/52b59501-ad3e-4d14-a797-5e1351d6bce0/China-in-Africa--An-AFRICOM-Response---Todd-A--Hof.aspx..> Accessed on 10/9/2013.

⁶⁰Wood, Sara, Africa Command Will Consolidate U.S Efforts on Continent, U.S Department of Defense, 2007. <http://www.exchange.gov/news/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2946>. Accessed on

initiative seemed to check all the boxes in terms of what the continent really needs, which could be revisited with a more open mind and clear cut objectives with African leaders playing a big role in determining the complexion and content of the project.

Often a time the top hierarchies of the US and China publicly state that they wish to work together in Africa for the better of the continent, and not to fight over the resources in the continent. This is a point which liberal theorists would like to see more of and in practice for they would argue it would be able to dilute the obsession with military superiority and the pursuit of selfish economic interests. If the United States and Chinese leadership mean it to the word that are better off working together in Africa, this is also one of the avenues available to African leaders to treat as an opportunity to use the initiative to bring the two power houses together. According to Cooke, “both China and the United States are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of building African security capacity. U.S. and Chinese commitment coincides with increased commitments by African states, regional and sub-regional organizations, and international organization”.⁶¹ Saferworld echo the same observation to highlight how committed Africa has stepped up to address the issue of peace and security in the continent and posits that “the African Union (AU) has placed peace and security high on its agenda...that African leaders have collectively agreed upon the need for an African regional peace and security architecture as part of the AU lays testament to the

14/11/2013.

⁶¹Cooke, Chinese Engagement: Prospects for Improving U.S. – China – Africa Cooperation: Centre For Strategic and International Studies: December 2007.

http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/o8711_cooke_us_chinesengagement_web.pdf. Accessed 18/11/2013.

importance they attach to the issue”.⁶² While Africa’s commitment is so noted, it is also important to recognize that the continent still has a handicap of resources and expertise to match the new security challenges. Of late, China has invested a lot in modernizing her military capabilities and their combined presence with the US in Africa could go a long way in helping the continent to deal with its security issues. Adebajo observes that:

a critical area of interest to Africa in which China is currently playing a supportive role is peacekeeping through the UN. After decades in Somalia and Rwanda in 1993 and 1994 respectively, Western peacekeepers largely abandoned the continent for several years...By May 2007, China had deployed 1,800 peacekeepers to missions in Sudan, the DRC, Liberia, Cote d’Ivoire, Ethiopia/Eritrea and Western Sahara”.⁶³

Combining this with Chinese extension of a helping hand to trouble spots in the continent, the US will need to engage more openly with the East Asian giant concerning AFRICOM and other security initiatives in Africa in order for them to synergize their efforts more effectively. Africa needs to impress upon the two to consider the project as a joint initiative that is fully formulated and implemented together to dispel any misgivings that have come to saddle it with a lot of uncertainties.

Since Beijing is increasingly becoming a more welcome player than Washington DC in the continent, Africa must seize the initiative to influence the decision and also to be at the table when the matter is being mooted. While it may go a long way in helping to dispel the fear that AFRICOM was meant by the US as a military show of muscle, it may turn out to be the best possible symbolic expression that the US and China can work together in the continent in a mutually complimentary manner. In the process Africa’s ability to deal with the pirates in the Indian Ocean, extremists and terrorists in the North and drug traffickers in the West and South of the continent will be hugely enhanced, creating a safer and peaceful

⁶² Saferworld, China’s Growing Role in African Peace and Security, 21.

⁶³ Adebajo, Adekeye, An Axis of Evil? China, the United States and France in Africa, 231.

environment for development to take root.

8. Conclusion

One obvious thing is that international politics is hugely an unpredictable enterprise. Many events in the past can play testament to that fact and the end of the Cold War was one such an occurrence where scholars and other observers alike failed to anticipate its coming. It took many of them by surprise and came too soon for some as it happened. In the same wave length it would have qualified as absurd if one were to predict that China, in the post-war era, such a peripheral international player worth of nothing safe for mere mentioning, would take the world by storm and captivate the halls of scholars, journalists and expert practitioners alike in the twenty-first century.

It is difficult to draw parallels between the current global geopolitical temperatures and dominant eras of the past but one thing is very clear and that is the fact that China and the United States are declared the de facto two ‘big brothers’ in the current international world order. How brotherly towards each other they are or could was part of the investigation undertaken by this paper, especially to measure how their increasing and visible contact in Africa is shaping up. Sifting through the available literature and the direct personal responses to the questionnaire which this study generated, there appears to be a well-measured sense of optimism that China and the United States can cooperate and collaborate in Africa for the benefit of the three parties and the world beyond. However, there is also a growing observation that there would be certain preconditions to meet in order to move closer to concluding that the rise of China does not upset the order of the current geopolitical ‘calmness’ especially in relation to how the United States perceive the intents and actions of the former. Thus the paper concludes with the following observations and insights;

- i. To those who pay too close attention to the current level and manner of engagement between China and Africa and the United States and Africa are seeing a story worth telling. It is interesting to learn that one would almost suspect that international itineraries of the Presidents of China and the United States are handled by one Chief of Protocol when it comes to Africa. Quite often it has been observed that the presidents from these two countries seemingly follow each other to Africa and they visit almost identical capitals in the continent. This development is raising suspicions that it is a matter of turf battles where one is not prepared to allow an iota of space for the other to exploit to their advantage. While there is nothing significant and tangible to prove that as a fact, it is quite discernible from the pattern of behavior that power and influence are the hallmarks of the perceived motivations.
- ii. It is also an undisputable fact that the United States recognizes that China has pushed her way to the top table of international affairs and has come in with a fashionable style and appeal to Africa. At the moment it would prove a difficult task to divorce the economy of the United States from that of China, much the same way as the rest of the world from that of China. In direct bilateral relations, the US and China have come into close economic contact despite their numerous and fundamental differences. The main question here is whether this growing economic interdependence and the fact that Beijing is increasingly rising in stature, not only in Africa but also in other regions of the world, developed and developing, would impose or impress upon Washington DC to accept that the centre of global power is slowly shifting towards the East from the global North? It is obvious that Africa is contributing significantly towards the rise of China economically and commentary seems to suggest that Western countries are feeling the pinch of this development. According to Robinson,

“the West must prepare to engage with Africa of the future. This is the Africa that has benefited from infrastructure development, has a (at least initially) high economic growth, a population comparable to that of China, and is still a provider of strategic oil and mineral supplies”.⁶⁴ The message is loud and clear. The old Africa is no more and the time has come for affected parties to acknowledge and accept that the dynamics of the game have changed and work towards cooperation for a win-win outcome.

- iii. Except for the issues related to the combat against the global threats of terrorism, the United States and China are not necessarily on the same wave length when it comes to other security matters. The two countries have always had sticky issues related to peace and security including none other than the never ending issue of Taiwan and the massive military presence of the United States in Asia Pacific. Washington DC still feels obligated to provide military cover for Taipei to counter form of aggression by Beijing to execute a reunification of the island with the mainland by force which does not sit comfortably with China. The heavy military presence of the United States, especially in East Asia is also causing jitters in Beijing especially these days when China is growing more assertive and sending signals that the US days in the region should come to an end. Expert opinion is such that the potential for a misunderstanding remains high at all times. Adding Africa to this mix of hot spots in the relations between the two could prove detrimental, not only to African interests, but also to global peace and security. However, the issue of counter terrorism provides a feasible avenue for the two countries to collaborate peacefully in Africa because of

⁶⁴ Robinson, David. A, Hearts, Minds and Wallets: Lessons from China's Growing Relationship with Africa, 867.

common strategic interests. As their investments keep on increasing in the continent, so will be the need for them to engage each other more soberly in the continent and elsewhere including in the Asia Pacific. The end result is a calmer geopolitical environment much to the attainment and maintenance of global peace and security. However, it is also very worrisome to learn that either side, based on selfish interests, can decide to use the situation in the continent to gain each other's favour. For example, Bonnie and Glaser observed that China changed her approach towards Sudan in the build up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics and successfully worked together with U.S at the United Nations to find solutions to the problems in Darfur. They wrote that "Chinese disregard for the human rights implications of their investments in Sudan and aid to Khartoum drew criticism from the U.S. and other nations. China's desire to avoid tarnishing its international image provided some leverage".⁶⁵ Apparently the U.S and other leading sporting nations had threatened that they would pull out of the Beijing Games, which prompted China to cooperate given the implications that could have resulted from U.S withdrawal. To this end, it needs to be argued that it does not serve Africa well for China or the U.S to act sensibly in the interest of safeguarding their own national interests.

- iv. It must be a given fact that the primary reason why China and the United States are increasingly becoming visible in Africa is because of the simple reason that they are in a race to access and acquire energy and mineral resources from the continent. However, there is absolutely nothing new about industrialized countries vying in Africa for the same resources but for the first time in recent memory the world is

⁶⁵ Bonnie, Glaser. S, *The Diplomatic Relationship: Substance and Process*, 168.

witnessing a tussle between a non-Western country (China) and the West going head-to-head in this kind of competition. According to Mahbubani, “given the many simmering tensions, it would be unwise to assume smooth sailing ahead for America and China in their geopolitical relationship. The need for the U.S. and China to cooperate is therefore rising each day. Yet the potential for a major U.S. – China misunderstanding is rising as well”.⁶⁶ In the trail of this increasing competition, controversies have erupted and there has been a lot of finger pointing from both directions. The traditional way of the Western game plan of conditionalities on aid and other forms of assistance has been met with a counter strategy of the Chinese where conditions exist not.

- v. Finally, on the basis of the foregoing, this paper argues that Africa has been provided with one of the best opportunities to rise to the occasion and ensure that the era of natural resource extraction and exportation are over. The time has come for African governments and leaders to put trade facilitation and foreign direct investment as the primary conditions for the exchanges between the continent and the rest of the potential buyers. Africa is adequately aware of history and the hardship that it brought upon her people, decades before and after colonialism, and as such it must be expected that the leaders know what ought to be done to correct past mistakes. Recalling the elephant – tree – ant analogy used at the beginning of this paper, the three need each other and what is important is that each shall recognize their role towards a mutual co-existence for the benefit of all.

⁶⁶Mahbubani, Kishore, *The Great Convergence*, 126.

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10. ANPPENDIX – QUESTIONNAIRE.

Based on your own personal observation and expertise, kindly address the following questions as broad as possible, providing examples where possible.

1. Is there a positive tightened Chinese and American engagement in Africa? (Politically and economically).
2. Do you think China is becoming a Superpower and potentially to replace the US as a global hegemon?
3. Can China and US work together as partners in Africa? (If yes, how? If no, why?).
4. Are Europeans and the US feeling the encroachment of China in Africa? What is the reaction and what is your opinion on the matter?
5. In the balance of all probabilities, is Africa in good shape to handle the new attention?
6. What prospects, challenges and threats does Chinese and American competition in the continent hold for international peace and the global political economy?
7. How best do you think Africa can position herself to benefit from the tussle?